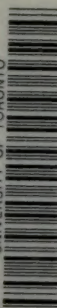


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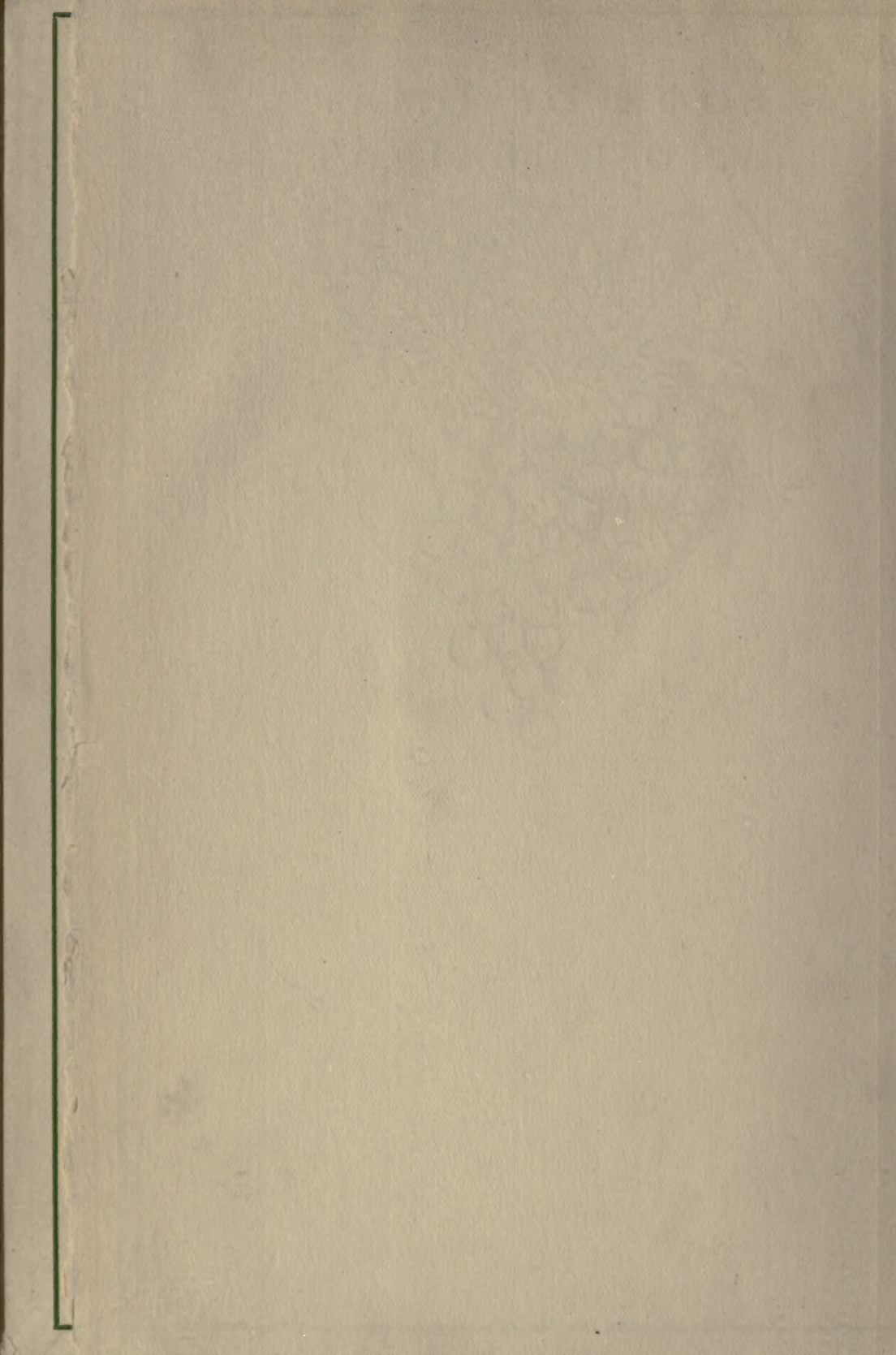
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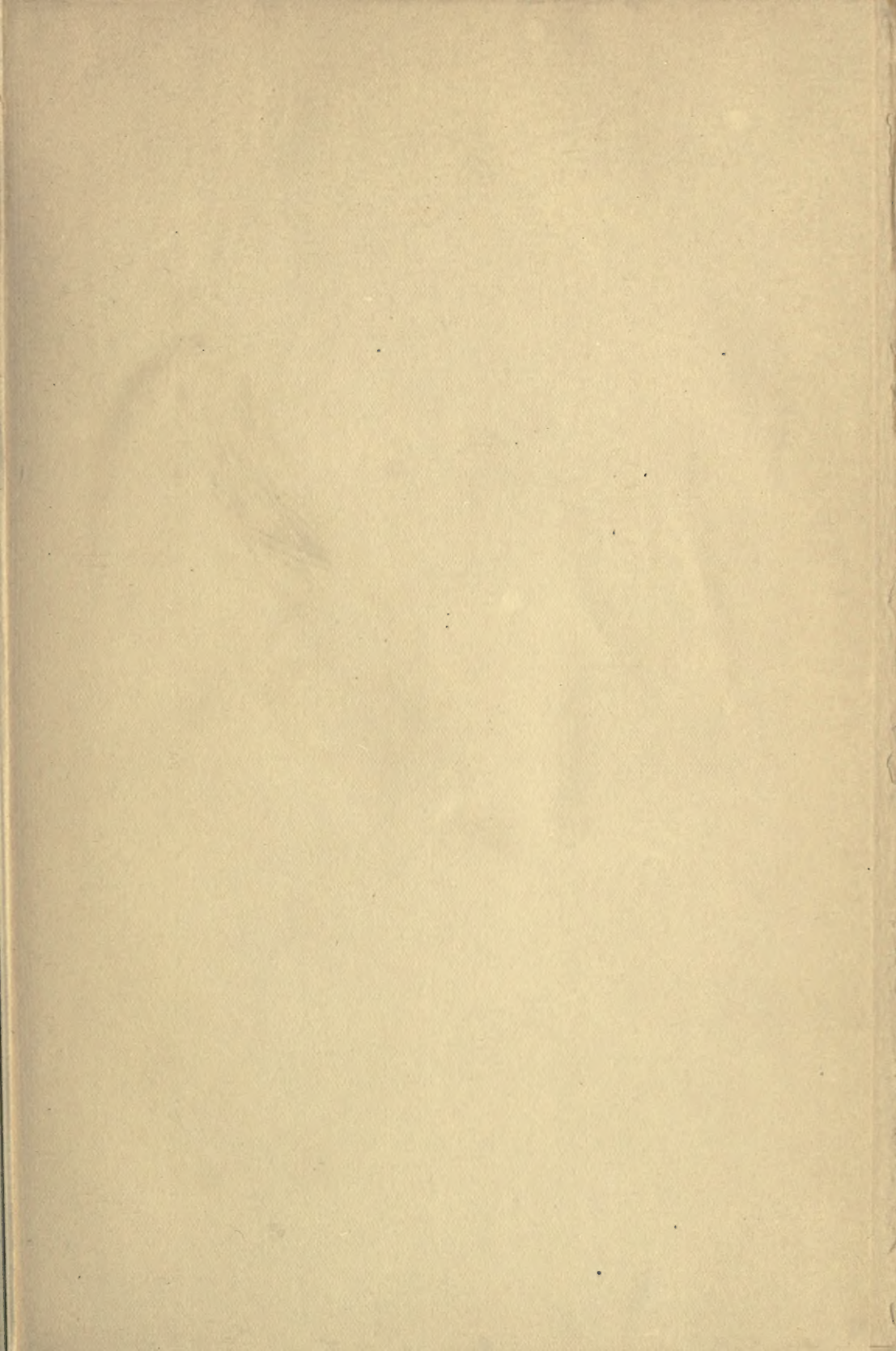


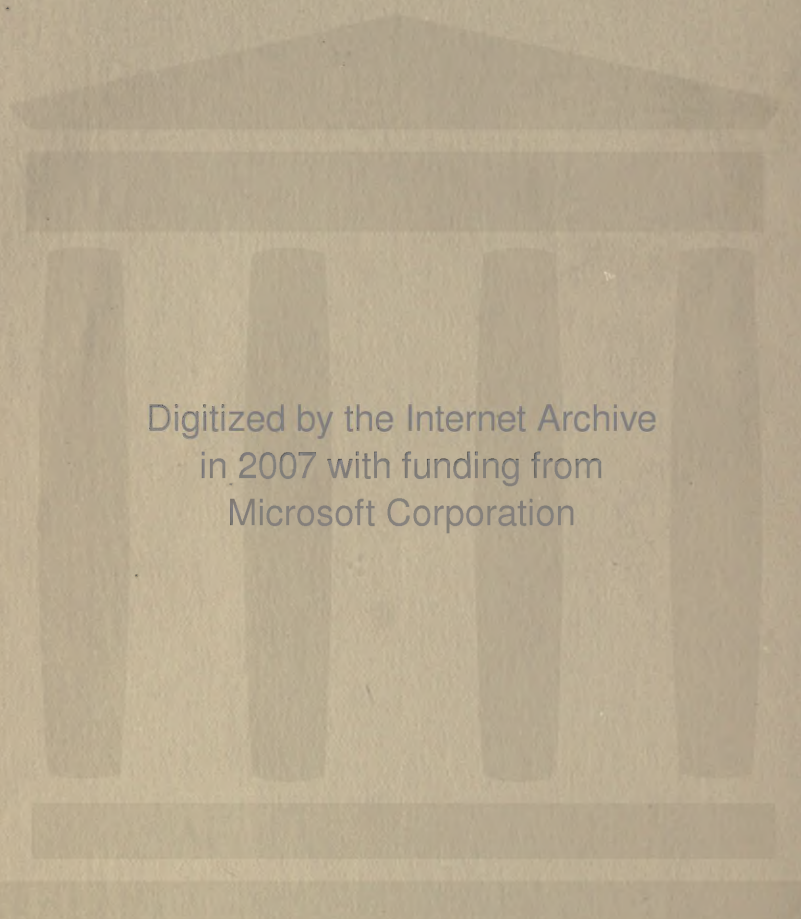
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BOOK OF OMAR
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THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT



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The Book of OMAR *and* RUBÁIYÁT

BEING A BOOK OF MISCELLANIES—BIOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL,
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND PICTORIAL NOTES ON OMAR KHAYYAM OF
NAISHAPUR AND HIS INSPIRED QUATRAINS

The Bankside Press
M. F. MANSFIELD, *Publisher*
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THE SPECIAL COVER DESIGN AND END PAPERS WERE
DONE FOR THIS VOLUME BY BLANCHE McMANUS.

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THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

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THE ETERNAL OMAR

By RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

APURITANICAL Scotland worships Robert Burns. We are a paradoxical race in many ways, but we have seldom been so paradoxical as in this matter of Omar Khayyam. Here have we set up as a national literary idol a poet who is a professed atheist and sensualist, a "pagan" naked and unashamed. We stoned Bradlaugh for profanities mild compared with:—

"O Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!"

The paradox is, I suppose, only a part of another paradox: the big streak of poetry somehow or other smuggled into our practical prosaic breed. We Anglo-Saxons would seem, after all, to love (as we have assuredly made) fine poetry, and so long as you say a thing in poetry—beware, indeed, of saying it in prose!—you can say pretty much what you like. Poetry, we say, is not to be taken quite literally. If a prose

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writer boasts of being drunk all day long some library will refuse to circulate him, but if you express yourself after this fashion—

“ Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the air
As not a true-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware—”

nobody minds; or, if anyone does mind, they are told it is only the poet's “symbolism.” I suppose “Willie brew'd a peck o' maut” is to be taken symbolically! One can only say that when poets choose such warm human imagery for the expression of their spiritual conceptions there is reason to suspect them of at least a hankering after the things imaged; just as the warm human imagery of some ecstatic hymns of the saints lays them under a like suspicion. The man who wrote Solomon's Song, whatever his mystical intentions, can hardly have been a confirmed anchorite. Of course, Omar can't have drunk as much as he bragged, as Fitz-Gerald says. That had been impossible. No doubt,

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too, he occasionally used the word wine with a mystical intention, after the manner of other Persian poets; but, for the most part, it is probable that FitzGerald was right when he wrote in his first preface: " . . . his Worldly Pleasures are what they profess to be without any Pretence at divine Allegory: his Wine is the veritable Juice of the Grape: his Tavern, where it was to be had: his Saki, the Flesh and Blood that poured it out for him: all which, and where the Roses were in Bloom, was all he profess'd to want of this World or to expect of Paradise."

FitzGerald omitted this passage from his later prefaces, perhaps out of deference to M. Nicolas, who preferred the Sufi theory, but it is evident from the concluding paragraph of his final preface, that, while he had modified its expression, he remained of the same opinion to the end. One has no space here to discuss the matter, but one may hazard that, hypocrisy apart, Omar has been taken at his word in England and America, taken literally as a pessimistic epicurean (a prettier phrase than "atheist" and "sensualist"), taken in fact as FitzGerald meant him to be taken.

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Thus, I think it might be proved that this small handful of strangely scented rose-leaves have been dynamic as a disintegrating spiritual force in England and America, as no other written words have been during the last twenty-five years. Mr. George Moore has been nothing like so dangerous! One of Omar's forcible epigrams has proved mightier than a volume by Mr. Herbert Spencer.

Turning to the literary side of the matter, Mr. Nathan Haskell Dole's elaborate variorum edition, together with Mr. E. Heron-Allen's annotations, give us pretty well as much data as we need to illustrate FitzGerald's way of making his classic. Mr. Heron-Allen's annotations are of particular importance, as they trace to their source one or two quatrains which before had been considered FitzGerald's original splendors. Mr. Heron-Allen shows how the striking image—

"The Bird of time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing,"

for which there is no parallel in the original Omar, was adapted by FitzGerald from another Persian poet, Ferid ud-din Attar, to whose line: "The bird of the

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sky flutters along its appointed path," it bears an almost exact resemblance. Similarly, he points to the same poet for the original of the noble lines:—

"Earth could not answer; nor the seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn."

It used to be somewhat freely said that Omar was nearly all FitzGerald. How entirely fanciful the statement was Mr. Haskell Dole and Mr. Heron-Allen have enabled even those who have no Persian to see for themselves. Broadly speaking, the entire opposite is the truth, and there is hardly anything of importance in FitzGerald that has not now been traced to its source. Far indeed from Omar being so meagre an original, FitzGerald by no means worked up all the ore that lay to his hand. Of the large proportion of love poetry among the original Rubaiyat FitzGerald's version, for example, gives hardly a hint. But if FitzGerald's poetical originality cannot be maintained, his artistic mastery remains unquestioned. He did, indeed, as Tennyson said, "divinely well." There are those who hold that he did best in his first version. There are always such fanatics of the first edition among the

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admirers of a great poem. How such a contention can be upheld I fail to see. On the contrary, I think that in almost every case where the fourth edition differs from the first, the change is in favor, and sometimes strikingly in favor, of the later version. Take the first stanza. As FitzGerald originally printed it, it ran:—

“Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight :
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.”

تجسس
تجسس
I have seen this praised above the more familiar version, because its imagery is more characteristically Eastern. But no doubt it was for this very reason that FitzGerald rejected it. His artistic instinct told him that it was too Eastern, too technically Eastern, for his Western paraphrase. And so in other cases we find him with a sure choice rejecting the, so to say, provincial Eastern image, for the image of more general application. Besides, the improvement in the mere technique of his verse is constantly marked. The frequent clumsinesses of his first version almost entirely disappear in the last, and it is a suggestive lesson in

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literary magic to see the half-born line by some almost imperceptible touch suddenly made alive and perfect. There is little apparent difference between these two versions of the most famous quatrain of all :—

"Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
And Wilderness is Paradise enow—"

and :—

"A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!"

Yet, as we examine them, how right, how expressive, each change is seen to be. How easily runs "A Book of Verses underneath the Bough" after the congested b's of the earlier version, and how much better is "Verses" than "Verse," and "Jug" than "Flask." If only FitzGerald had made one more change, and saved us that "enow," which is not inevitably enough placed to enjoy the full advantage of the archaic charm it has in such a connection as Milton's "enow of such," &c. One cannot escape the suspicion that FitzGerald

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was hard up for a rhyme. Did space allow one might adduce many more obvious instances of FitzGerald's artistic improvements upon his first edition. As for the few stanzas he included in his first and second editions, but omitted from his final edition, there is not one of them quite up to the average of those he kept in, unless tentatively we except this from the first edition:—

“ But leave the Wise to wrangle, and with me
The quarrel of the Universe let be ;
And, in some corner of the Hubbub coucht,
Make Game of that which makes as much of thee.”

And this from the second edition :

“ Better, oh better, cancel from the Scroll
Of Universe one luckless Human Soul,
Than drop by drop enlarge the Flood that rolls
Hoarser with Anguish as the Ages roll.”

But, of course, the gross infelicity of one rhyme sound in this last quatrain, and the repetition of the same word “rolls” and “roll,” obviously made the quatrain inadmissible in a finished piece of work, in spite of its striking last line.

No ! taking it all round, FitzGerald knew what

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he was about as an artist when he chose the fourth to be the definite edition of that great paraphrase, which, in spite of occasional ruggedness and obscurity, is one of the finest pieces of literary art in the English language.

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THE OMAR KHAYYAM CLUB

By "A MEMBER"

THE literary cranks of London are as the sand on the sea-shore for number, and yet they have rather diminished than increased during the last few years. The Wordsworth Society no longer collects archbishops and bishops and learned professors in the Jerusalem Chamber to solve the mystery of existence under the guidance of the great poet of Rydal, and one is rather dubious as to whether the Goethe Society has much to say for itself to-day, although in its time it has crammed the Westminster Town Hall with enthusiastic lovers of German literature. The Shelley Society one only hears of from time to time by its ghastly burden of debt, a state which perhaps reflects the right kind of glory upon its great hero, whose aptitude for making paper boats out of Bank of England notes, if apocryphal, is, at any rate, a fair exemplification of his capacity for getting rid of money. And as to the Browning Society, with its blue-spectacled ladies, deep

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in the mysteries of Sordello, if the cash balance, which is said at Girton to have been expended in sweetmeats, had any existence, at the London centre, one knows not what confectioner at the West End has reaped the benefit. There are, however, some fairly flourishing organizations at this moment. One of them is the "Sette of Odd Volumes," another the Johnson Club, to say nothing of the "Vagabonds," the "Ghouls," and the latest comer, the Omar Khayyam Club.

This society was formed in an informal way without any desire to attract public attention. We were simply bent upon making an occasion, once a quarter, to eat a dinner, to gratify our own feelings of companionship and to gratify further our intense appreciation of Edward FitzGerald's famous quatrains. Not one of the original members of the society—and there were seven or eight of them—had any knowledge of Persian, and it was not at all with the famous poet of Persia, as he is known to the great scholars of our time, that we concerned ourselves—it was only that poet as interpreted by Edward FitzGerald with his

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wonderful interpretation of life as understood by a great number of people at the present day. The society was practically started by three men, all of whom talked it over together for a very long time beforehand; one of these was our indefatigable secretary, Mr. Frederick Hudson. As I have said, there were some eight of us who first agreed to form this club, and we each invited one or two guests to the first dinner; one of the eight, Mr. Arthur Hacker, the well-known artist, made us a *menu* card, and Mr. Hacker was good enough to introduce to the society Mr. Solomon and Mr. Shannon, two brother-artists, who each in turn has been victimized to the extent of a *menu* card. Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy came as a guest, and I mention this because an absurd statement got abroad that he was the founder of the Omar Khayyam Club; we, however, were very glad to have Mr. McCarthy, because he has done some excellent work in the vein of Edward FitzGerald, and because, also, he has himself made a translation of Omar, which is the delight of every book collector on account of its curious type and other bibliographical

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eccentricities. Mr. McCarthy was elected our first chairman, and we added a very considerable number of members to the society, which, it was arranged, should not exceed fifty-nine, this number having no more erudite significance than the fact that it was in the year 1859 that Edward FitzGerald published his famous translation or paraphrase.

Among the guests of the club—many of whom have since become members—one may mention Mr. Edward Clodd, Mr. Edmund Gosse, Mr. Sidney Low (editor of the *St. James Gazette*), Judge Keene, whose Persian studies have carried him very much into the regions of FitzGerald's original, and several other well-known men in literature and art. The most dramatic incident in connection with the club has already been fully stated in the press: this was the visit of certain of our members to FitzGerald's grave at Boulge, near Woodbridge.

As I am putting on record for all time the account of the origin of a club which is likely to last longer than some of the cranks which have been mentioned, I may as well recapitulate the story of

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that visit. Some years ago Mr. William Simpson was travelling in Persia with the Afghan Boundary Commission as special artist of the *Illustrated London News*. Mr. Simpson, an enthusiastic Omar Khayyamite, and one of our earliest members, bethought himself of a pilgrimage to Omar's tomb, and with a single companion, rode some miles to the spot where the great Persian is buried at Naishapur. He found one of the wishes of Omar singularly realised—the wish that rose-leaves should twine about his tomb—and he brought back with him some seed of those very rose-bushes, which was sent to Mr. Thiselton-Dyer at Kew Gardens, and there duly cultivated. For some time—long before the Omar Club was thought of—it was a pet project with Mr. Edward Clodd and Mr. Simpson that the rose-bushes which should grow at Kew from the seed culled on Omar's tomb should be transplanted to FitzGerald's grave. But the existence of a society gave special facilities for carrying out this project, and our visit to Boulge, with its accompanying ceremonial (sanctioned, it may be said, by the executors of Edward FitzGerald), is

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now matter of literary history. Let that pass; suffice to say, without having any ambition to be known to the public, or, indeed, to concern ourselves with the outside world, we are going to settle down in the future in a quiet sort of way to this quarterly dinner of a few good friends and comrades. Perhaps our spirit could not be better exemplified than in the letter which Mr. Theodore Watts, the eminent poet and critic, wrote to the Secretary on the occasion of our last dinner; I trust he will pardon me for reproducing his letter, and I cannot in any better way conclude what little there is to be said on the subject—

“Although I am compelled to forego the great pleasure of dining with you on Friday,” writes Mr. Watts, “I must not miss the opportunity of telling you how entirely I admire, and aspire to be in sympathy with, what I am sure must be the temper of an Omar Khayyam Club. The King of the Wise was, first and foremost, a good fellow, as every line of his poems shows; so was old Fitz, the greatest man, save Nelson, that has been produced even by

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East Anglia, and I must say that I never came across a genuine, thoroughgoing disciple of the Master who was *not* a good fellow. No mean and ill-conditioned man could possibly enjoy the philosophy of the Rubaiyat. Now, as I myself would far rather have the character of a good fellow among good fellows than the character of a man of genius, what I have said above is meant for high praise of your club. And no one could possibly have taken more interest in the late charming ceremony got up by my friends E—— C—— and C—— S—— than I did, and I hope when you print an account of it you will not forget to send me a copy, as I want to read certain verses by McCarthy (another and still older friend) which, I hear, have appeared somewhere, but I cannot discover where."



MENU CARD

Designed by Solomon Soloman, R. A.

OMAR KHAYYAM
.. CLUB. ..

ch 0 2

BURFORD BRIDGE.

July 13th. 1895.

ch 0 2

ONE CUP IN JOY BEFORE THE BANQUET ENDS
ONE THOUGHT FOR. VANISHED. FOR TRANSFIGURED
FRIENDS.

STARS ON THE LIVING COPE OF HEAVEN EMBOSSED.
THE HEAVEN OF LOVE THAT O'ER US BEAMS AND
RENDS!

ROSES. AND BAY FOR MANY A PHANTOM HEAD!
DEATH IS BUT WHAT WE MAKE IT—FOR THE DEAD.

HELD HARD IN MEMORY. WHOM WE LOVED AND LOST
SHALL LIVE WHILE BLOOD IS WARM AND WINE IS RED

Edmund Gosse

FRONTISPIECE OF THE MENU CARD.



THE TABLE-CLOTH OF THE CLUD, DESIGNED BY ARTHUR HACKER A.R.A., AND WORKED IN TAPESTRY BY MRS. FREDERIC HUDSON.

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A CLUB DINNER

ONE of the early dinners of the Omar Khayyam Club took place at Frascati's Restaurant. It will be seen from the names given within that the list of those present was a very strong one, including among its English writers—most of whom are members—the names of Mr. J. M. Barrie, Mr. Anthony Hope Hawkins, Mr. Max Pemberton, Mr. Coulson Kernahan, Mr. Edmund Gosse, Mr. Frederick Greenwood, Mr. Andrew Lang, Mr. Augustine Birrell, Mr. H. W. Massingham, and Mr. Stephen Phillips; while journalism was represented by two well-known newspaper proprietors, Sir George Newnes and Sir William Ingram. America was represented by Mr. Charles Scribner and by Mr. G. W. Cable. Mr. Cable, indeed, arrived by boat at Liverpool only on the morning of that day, and in London the same evening, when he followed Mr. Barrie—whose guest he

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is while in England—to the Club dinner, and made a very interesting speech expressing his delight and pleasure at this his first visit to English soil. When it is remembered that, in the opinion of Mr. Barrie and not a few other men of letters on this side of the Atlantic, Mr. Cable is the most distinguished of American authors, that his “Old Creole Days” has more the atmosphere of real genius than anything that any other living American writer has given us, one does not doubt that Mr. Cable’s reception in England will be, all round, a very cordial one. This sentiment was delightfully expressed by Mr. L. F. Austin, the Vice-President, in proposing the toast of the Members’ Guests—a toast which, as I have said, was responded to by Mr. Cable, by Mr. George Macmillan, who gave a qualified promise that the next edition of FitzGerald’s “Omar Khayyam” should be dedicated to the Omar Khayyam Club, by Sir George Newnes, who made a very neat little speech which seemed to express unqualified enjoyment of the gathering, and by Mr. Stephen Phillips, who in his response recited these lines—

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"Omar, when it was time for thee to die,
Thou saidst to those around thee, Let me lie
Where the North wind may scatter on my grave
Roses ; and now thou hast what thou didst crave,
Since from the Northern shore the Northern blast
Roses each year upon thy tomb hath cast.
Thy more familiar comrades, who have sped
Many a health to thee, send roses red.
We are but guests unto the tavern brought,
And have a flower the paler for that thought ;
Yet is our love so rich that roses white
Shall fall empurpled on thy tomb to-night."

This is rather to anticipate the order of the evening's proceedings, however, which were opened by Mr. Henry Norman—the President for the year—with a very able and witty speech. He caught the note of the Club's mood in urging that Mr. Asquith, who had been invited as the Guest of the Club, in distinction to the Guests of the Members, was there not in his position as a distinguished politician or as a distinguished lawyer, but purely in consideration of his genuine interest in the subject. Mr. Asquith, in response, declared that there are few greater benefactors of the species than the man who discovers a new bond of human companionship and a fresh ex-

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cuse for social intercourse. "If that be true," he added, "as I believe it is, the founders of this Club are entitled to a special measure of gratitude, for they have not only hit upon a hitherto untried expedient for bringing men together to eat and drink and talk, but they have at the same time invented a most admirable test—if I may without irreverence borrow a phrase from the terminology of the Presbyterian Church—for 'fencing the tables' against the intrusion of pedants, Philistines and bores." Then followed a most admirable eulogy of the poem which Edward FitzGerald has made familiar to us. "As regards substance," Mr. Asquith concluded, "where else in literature has the littleness of man contrasted with the baffling infinitude of his environment, the resulting duty of serenity and acquiescence been more brilliantly painted or more powerfully enforced? The million battles that the Eternal Saki pours from his bowl, the clay which lies passive under the thumping of the potter, the ball that is thrown hither and thither about the field, the helpless pawns that the great player moves into impossible positions

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with an inscrutable purpose, the endless procession of empty pageantries, the sultans and heroes who are, with all their pomp and pride, after all but passing inmates of this 'batter'd caravanserai'—such is the crowd of vivid and moving images which Omar's panorama presents to us. These, if I understand them aright, are the thoughts and pictures with which Omar and FitzGerald have permanently enriched the poetry of the world."

Mr. Edmund Gosse expressed, as a member, the indebtedness of the Club for a very beautiful table-cloth, which Mr. Arthur Hacker had designed and Mrs. Frederick Hudson, the charming wife of the indefatigable Hon. Secretary of the Club, had worked in tapestry. As will be seen from the accompanying illustration, it represents a branch of an apple-tree, with the name of Edward FitzGerald written across it. In each of the fifty-nine apples—representing the limits of membership—a member will write his name, the five apples to the right having been reserved for the five original members of the Club. That did not exhaust the proceedings, for Mr.

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Augustine Birrell, then as always an accomplished speaker, declared the Club's indebtedness to Mr. Owen Seaman for the parody of Omar which appeared on the menu-card, and is printed on another page, and to Miss Rose le Quesne, a skillful young black-and-white artist, for designing the menu itself. Before the evening closed the President had taken an opportunity of expressing, in an aside, a sentiment of the Club, which should always be emphasised, to the effect that the Club recognises one and only one translation of Omar Khayyam—that it is concerned with FitzGerald's poem and none other.

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TO OMAR

By OWEN SEAMAN

Read at a Banquet of the Omar Khayyam Club

MASTER, in memory of that Verse of Thine,
And of Thy rather pretty taste in Wine,
We gather at this jaded Century's end,
Our Cheeks, if so we may, to incarnadine.

Thou hast the kind of Halo which outstays
Most other Genii's. Though a Laureate's bays
Should slowly crumple up, Thou livest on
Having survived a certain Paraphrase.

The Lion and the Alligator squat
In Dervish Courts—the Weather being hot—
Under umbrellas. Where is Mahmúd now?
Plucked by the Kitchener and gone to Pot!

Not so with Thee; but in Thy place of Rest,
Where East is East and never can be West,
Thou art the enduring Theme of dining Bards;
O make Allowances; they do their Best.

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Our health—Thy Prophet's health—is but so-so;
Much marred by men of Abstinence who know
 Of Thee and all Thy lovely Tavern-lore
Nothing, nor care for it one paltry Blow.

Yea, we ourselves, who beam around Thy Bowl,
Somewhat to dull convention bow the Soul,
 We sit in sable Trouserings and Boots,
Nor do the Vine-leaves deck a single Poll.

How could they bloom in uncongenial air?
Nor though they bloomed profusely, should we wear
 Upon our Heads—so tight is Habit's hold—
Aught else besides our own unaided Hair.

The Epoch curbs our Fancy. What is more,
TO BE, in any case, is now a Bore.

Even in Humour there is nothing new;
There is no Joke that was not made before.

But Thou! with what a fresh and poignant sting
Thy Muse remarked that Time was on the Wing!
 Ah, Golden Age, when virgin was the Soil,
And Decadence was deemed a newish Thing.

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These picturesque departures now are stale;
The noblest Vices have their vogue and fail;
Through some inherent Taint or lack of Nerve
We cease to sin upon a generous scale.

This hour, though drinking at my Host's expense,
I fear to use a fine incontinence,

For terror of the Law and him that waits
Outside, the unknown X, to hale us hence.

For, should he make of us an ill Report
As pipkins of the more loquacious Sort,

We might be lodged, the Lord alone knows *Where*,
Save Peace were purchased with a pewter Quart.

And yet, O Lover of the purple Vine,
Haply Thy Ghost is watching how we dine;

Ah, let the *Whither* go; we'll take our chance
Of fourteen days with option of a Fine.

Master, if we, Thy Vessels, staunch and stout,
Should stagger, half-seas-over, blind with doubt,

In sound of that dread moaning of the Bar,
Be near, be very near, to bail us out!

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OMAR CLUB MISCELLANY

IN 1897 at the Annual Dinner Mr. Gosse announced the result of an appeal which the Club had made to the late Shah of Persia on the neglected grave of Omar at Naishápur. The Shah, not having the advantage of knowing Omar through translation, took a very ordinary view of the matter. In fact, he told the Club that they might come and look after the poet's tomb for themselves. Shortly afterwards he was assassinated, but not, Mr. Gosse assured his hearers, by an emissary of the Club. . . . There is a rose bush at Kew which was transported from the tomb. An authority condemns it as of a "contemptible species," tho the Club is prepared to take oath that its fragrance is exquisite.



At a Club dinner Mr. Edmund Gosse ably reconciled some curiously incongruous elements in the

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contents of newspapers addicted to literary gossip and book chat, in some lines beginning :

“ While Zal and Rustum drew their thunderous line
Across the rolling veldts that shift and shine,
Or marching down the long sun-bitten road,
Went wheeling round Rhinocerosfontein,—

We, laagered safe from all our shadowy foes,
Performed our rites and waved the double rose,
Feasted in innocently Persian mode,
And told each other—what the master knows.”



A writer in “Blackwood’s” gives for the distinctly harmless Club which has found many of its inspirations in the “Rubaiyat”:

“We are told how these respectable men of
“letters sit with vine leaves or some other vege-
“table encircling their scanty locks; we have a
“vision of them pouring the cheap wine of Italy
“over the roses of Shiraz; their weak little
“parodies of the Master’s quatrains are passed
“round an appreciative press, until we are forced
“to believe that ‘the modest coterie which never
“‘advertises’ believes the eye of posterity is
“upon it. It would all be very droll but for

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“the careless use of FitzGerald’s name (*sic*). A
“dinner is as good an excuse for advertisement
“as anything, and logs are easily rolled across a
“dining table. But why should Edward Fitz-
“Gerald be thrust into this orgie of Culture?
“He never belonged to a modest club, he never
“sat with vine leaves round his head in the very
“presence of an industrious press, and the Omar
“Khayyam Club may not even plead the reck-
“lessness of hot youth for its unwarranted usurp-
“ation of an honoured name.”

This strikes one as a little shrill and deliberate.



A critic fears that some day there may be “too much Omar” and just a surfeit of “Rubaiyat.” It is quite evident that men, without knowing a line of Persian, will discuss translations which bear faint resemblances to the original. A clever skit appeared in “The London Academy” in which the Persian figures, and it is a rather smart “child” who asks the Questions:

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Q.—Who is this Omar, anyhow?

A.—Omar was a Persian.

Q.—Yes?

A.—A philosopher, and a poet, and a tentmaker, and an astronomer.

Q.—When?

A.—At about the time that William II. and Henry I. were reigning here.

Q.—And what did he write?

A.—He wrote rubaiyat.

Q.—Ru—?

A.—Rubaiyat—stanzas. A “rubai” is a stanza.

Q.—What are they about?

A.—Oh, love and paganism, and roses and wine.

Q.—How jolly! But isn't some of it rather steep?

A.—Well, it's Persian you see.

Q.—And these Omarians, as members of the Omar Club call themselves; I suppose they go in for love and paganism, and roses and wine, too?

A.—A little; as much as their wives will let them.

Q.—Wives?

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A.—Yes; they're mostly married. You see, Omar serves as an excuse for meeting more than anything else.

Q.—But they know Persian, of course?

A.—No; they use translations.

Q.—Are there many translations?

A.—Heaps. A new one every day.

THE ROSE OF OMAR.

An inscription for the Rose-Tree brought by Mr. W. Simpson from Omar's tomb at Naishapur, and planted to-day on the grave of Edward FitzGerald at Boulge.

“Reign here, triumphant Rose from Omar's grave,
Borne by a dervish o'er the Persian wave;
Reign with fresh pride, since here a heart is sleeping
That double glory to your master gave.

Hither let many a pilgrim step be bent
To greet the Rose re-risen in banishment;
Here richer crimson may its cup be keeping
Than brimmed it ere from Naishapur it went.”

EDMUND GOSSE.

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TO OMAR KHAYYAM.

“Wise Omar, do the southern breezes fling
Above your Grave, at ending of the Spring,
The Snowdrift of the Petals of the Rose,
The wild white Roses you were wont to sing?

.
You were a Saint of unbelieving Days,
Liking your Life, and happy in Men's praise;
Enough for you the shade beneath the bough,
Enough to watch the wild World go its ways.

.
Age of Progress! These eight hundred Years
Hath Europe shuddered with her Hopes and Fears,
And now!—she listens in the wilderness
To *thee*, and half believeth what she hears!

.
Ah, not from learned Peace and gay Content
Shall we of England go the way *he* went—
The singer of the Red Wine and the Rose—
Nay, otherwise than his our day is spent!

.
Serene he dwelt in fragrant Naishapur,
But we must wonder while the stars endure;
He knew The Secret; we have none that knows,
No man so sure as Omar once was sure.”

ANDREW LANG.

THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

OMAR AND OTHERS.

EARLY in the eleventh century of our era a rather curious compact was entered into by three youths who were attending lectures at the famous school of Naishápúr in Khorasan. Their understanding was that whichever of them attained to fortune should share it with the other two, and not preserve it for himself. This arrangement, in which the flippant will perceive only a kind of Persian edition of *The Three Musketeers*, was destined to have far-reaching consequences. These three schoolmates curiously enough were all fated to make a noise in the world; but the first of them to do so was Nizám ul Mulk, who became vizier to Sultan Alp Arslan. He kept his part of the agreement, and the two whom he assisted to name and fame are even better known, at any rate in Europe, than himself. One of them was Hasan bin Sabbáh, the founder of the sect of the Assassins. Nizám ul Mulk himself eventually fell a victim to a

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dagger directed by this terrible Old Man of the Mountain. The other was the subject of this article, the Hakim Omar Khayyám, more correctly Abul Fath Omar bin Ibrahim al Khayyám. The last part of his name indicates his father's profession as having been that of a tent-maker, and Omar has more than one allusion to it in his poems—*e.g.*,

"Khayyámi ki kháimahayi khémat midúkhht;"

or, as Mr. Le Gallienne gives it:

"Khayyám, who long at learning's tents hath sewn."

Until recently Omar's reputation in the West depended mainly upon his revision of the Persian Calendar—in the words of Gibbon: "A computation of time which surpasses the Julian and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style." We remember once seeing a German encyclopedia of fifty years ago or thereabouts, which, after devoting two long columns to an account of this feat, wound up with the remark: "Ist auch als Dichter bekannt." The whirligig of time has brought round its revenges, and nowadays, like Lewis Carroll, it is not for his works on algebra that Omar is known.

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They exist, nevertheless, and were published at Paris in 1851. In 1859 Edward FitzGerald gave the world his translation or paraphrase of the quatrains, a book which at first fell flat, but ultimately, by its four editions during the lifetime of its author, showed that the tide had turned. Henceforth Omar the mathematician and astronomer is swallowed up by Omar the pessimist, philosopher, and poet.

The rubái or quatrain, although associated in England exclusively with the name of Omar, is by no means an invention or monopoly of his, but on the contrary a favourite, and, indeed, a national metre added by the Persians to the sixteen which they borrowed from the Arab prosody. It contains four feet, and consequently four main accents: firstly a foot of three syllables (an anti-bacchius or molossus) accented on the central one; secondly, two very irregular and variously accented feet of three or four syllables each; lastly, a foot of one or two syllables, one syllable if the final of the preceding foot is long, but an iambus if it is short, in either case the fourth ictus is upon the last syllable of the whole line. Altogether there are

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twenty-four different ways in which these elements may be varied, so that the quatrain is by no means a monotonous medium of expression. It will be perceived that a line may consist of as many as thirteen or as few as ten syllables. Graceful and musical as the *rubái* is, it has always seemed to us curious that none of the translators of Omar have made any attempt at reproducing these characteristics and varied rhythms. FitzGerald invented, or at any rate naturalized, the famous line of ten syllables, and his successors are alike in having slavishly kept to it. Whinfield admits that it does not exactly correspond to the original, but declares that it very clearly suggests it, and to this opinion Mr. Le Gallienne presumably refers when he says that "it is accounted by those able to judge a beautiful echo of the old Persian music. There appears to be this difference," he adds, "that the rhymes in the Persian are trisyllabic," whereas, of course, they may consist, and do consist, of almost any number of syllables. We must confess that as regards ourselves, with the best will in the world, we have been unable to detect in the decasyllabic line the slightest movement

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of the Persian. Indeed, it is difficult to see how a line of five regular feet could suggest one of four feet, which are never all alike, and frequently all differ. However, we should be the last to deny the intrinsic beauty of FitzGerald's line, once it is admitted to be his and not Omar's. His was the true Midas touch. His subtle alchemy turned all to gold, and we have not the heart to say more in complaint of either his decaŷyllables or what we may call the cento method which he inaugurated, and in which Mr. Le Gallienne has followed closely in his footsteps. It is doubtful how many of the quatrains ascribed to Omar are really his or how they should be arranged, so if the English translators choose to depart from the non-committal alphabetic order of the Persian editions, and classify them according to their own sweet will, there is no harm done, if only the effect produced be good. The following trilogy from Mr. Le Gallienne is fine, though we should be sorry to say that every line originated in Omar's brain:

“ Spring, with the cuckoo-sob deep in his throat,
O'er all the land his thrilling whispers float,
Old earth believes his ancient lies once more,
And runs to meet him in a golden coat.

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And many a lovely girl that long hath lain
Beneath the grass, out in the sun and rain,
Lifts up a daisied head to hear him sing,
Hearkens a little, smiles, and sleeps again.

Yea, love, this very ground you lightly tread,
Who knows! is pillow to some maiden's head.
Ah! tread upon it lightly, lest you wake
The sacred slumber of the happy dead."

Death, according to Poe, is most poetical when it most closely allies itself to beauty. The death of a beautiful woman is the most poetical topic in the world, and we find in Omar the use again and again of that art which intensifies the throb of love poetry by keeping ever in mind the precariousness of the tenure by which we hold love from death. Thus FitzGerald:

"I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled,
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely head.

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!"

The first of the above two is much better rendered by Whinfield, who in 1883 published a version of 500 of the quatrains with the Persian text adjacent (Trubner's Oriental Series), a book which next to

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FitzGerald should be the most prized possession of every lover of Omar :

" Where'er you see a rose or tulip bed,
Know that a mighty monarch's blood was shed;
And where the violet rears her purple tuft,
Be sure a black-moled girl hath laid her head."

The second is much better rendered by Garner, an American who published in 1888 a translation of some of the quatrains in a book little known in England:

" The violets that by this river grow
Sprang from some lip here buried long ago;
And tread thou lightly on this tender green,
Who sleepeth here so still thou ne'er wilt know."

On the other hand, Mr. Johnson (1887), another translator little known, has undoubtedly improved upon Whinfield in another instance. We refer to the quatrain which Whinfield has as follows :

" Heaven's wheel has made full many a heart to moan,
And many a budding rose to earth has thrown,
Plume thee not on thy youth and lusty strength,
Full many a bud is blasted ere 'tis blown."

The following is the form which it assumes under Mr. Johnson's pen :

" Lo! blood of men, slain by the stroke of doom;
Lo! dust of men strewn on the face of earth;
Oh, take what life may give of youth or mirth,
Full many an opening bud shall never bloom."

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But let it be remembered always that FitzGerald came first.

Of the three translators we have principally in our eye—FitzGerald, Whinfield, and Mr. Le Gallienne (the order of place is the order of merit)—Whinfield has by far the largest number of quatrains. He, so far as we know, is the only writer who gives a rendering of an extremely beautiful and melodious quatrain which is quoted (by no less an authority than the King of Oude) as a model of all a quatrain should be, in the Fifth Stream of the Second Sea in the Haft Kalzum (first line, “*Az bad i saba dilam chu buyi tu girift*”):

“The Zephyrs waft thy fragrance, and it takes
My heart, and me, his Master, he forsakes;
Careless of me he pants and leaps to thee,
And thee his pattern and ensample makes!”

Omar's work has from the first been like the Song of Songs, in the fact that it has been interpreted by one school literally, but by the mystics each according to his own mysticism. FitzGerald discards the latter in favour of the former, and refuses to read for “wine” “*Dieu or La Divinité*,” as suggested by a French translator, or to see in the lover and his

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goddess but a parable of the worshipper and his God. Altogether quite a lover's breviary or handbook of the tender passion can then be culled by judicious selection from numerous quatrains, such as the following:

" Oh ! love, chief record of the realm of truth,
The chiefest couplet in the ode of youth.
Oh ! thou who knowest not the world of love,
Learn this that life is love, and love is truth."
Johnson.

" Long have I sought, but seldom found a lover ;
To love aright is to be nought but lover ;
He who would love, yet eat and rest him too,
Is still an animal, and not a lover.
For love is a great sleepless, foodless fire,
Love never moves his eyes from his desire ;
Were love to sleep—awakening, love were gone,
And what gross sustenance should love require ?"
Le Gallienne.

" This worldly love of your is counterfeit,
And, like a half-spent blaze, lacks light and heat ;
True love is his, who for days, months, and years,
Rests not, nor sleeps, nor craves for drink or meat.
Who so aspires to gain a rose-cheeked fair,
Sharp pricks from fortune's thorns must learn to bear.
See ! till this comb was cleft by cruel cuts,
It never dared to touch my lady's hair.
My love shone forth, and I was overcome,
My heart was speaking, but my tongue was dumb ;
Beside the water-brooks I died of thirst,
Was ever known so strange a martyrdom ?"
Whinfield.

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Omar's views upon religion, judging from his poems, veered at one time or another to every point of the theological compass. It is an experience many another has lived through, and as he himself says:

"From doubt to clear assurance is a breath,
A breath from infidelity to faith;
Oh, precious breath! enjoy it while you may,
'Tis all that life can give, and then comes death."

Whinfield.

"In my left hand I hold the Koran tight,
And grasp the wine-cup firmly in my right—
Thus do I stand beneath the eye of heaven,
Not quite a saint, nor yet a sinner quite."

Le Gallienne.

Or, as Mr. Le Gallienne more tersely expresses it, Omar is always ready to curse God with one cup and love him with the next. There can be no doubt that FitzGerald frequently improved considerably upon his author; to use the eloquent words of Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton: "Made richer still his opulent epigram"; witness the following:

"Oh, Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the road I was to wander in!
Thou wilt not with Predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin?"

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O Thou, who Man of baser Earth did make !
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake ;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's forgiveness give—and take !”

These are what Mr. Swinburne called the “crowning stanzas” of all FitzGerald wrote, but the following is the literal version from Whinfield :

“ With many a snare Thou didst beset my way,
And threatenest, if I fall therein, to slay ;
Thy rule resistless sways the world, yet thou
Imputest sin, when I do but obey !

O Thou ! who know'st the secret thoughts of all,
In time of sorest need who aidest all,
Grant me repentance, and accept my plea,
O Thou, who dost accept the pleas of all ! ”

The sense of fatality, “Kismet,” to be dimly read, indeed, in the magician's mirror of ink, or in the geomancer's bowl of sand, but in no wise to be put aside, is not often absent from Omar. But Black Care does not always occupy the crupper; “Eternal Hope” succeeds “Divine Despair” :

“ Our wildest wrong is part of His great Right,
Our weakness is the shadow of His Might,
Our sins are His, forgiven long ago,
To make His mercy more exceeding bright.”

Le Gallienns.

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To sum up, and leaving out of the question the prose versions, as we have throughout this article, FitzGerald's "Rose of the Hundred and One Petals" will remain the Omar *par excellence* to all who do not desire an absolutely literal translation. Those who do, can fall back on Whinfield, and check him by his own (the best) edition of the Persian text. The Villon Society's rendering, by Mr. John Payne, differs from all others, in that it reproduces the rhythms of the original, to which we referred above. This should be a boon. It is heartening to find that some one is making a fresh start, instead of merely publishing another variation on FitzGerald.

THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

A SELECTION FROM THE PROSE TRANSLATIONS OF THE QUATRAINS OF OMAR.

By JUSTIN HUNTLEY McCARTHY.

A voice came at dawn from the wine-shop,
crying, Arise, ye haunters of the tavern, arise, and fill
the cannikin before fate comes to fill the cup of
your being.



Without wine I cannot live, without the wine-
cup I cannot lift the loads of life. I am the slave
of that hour when the cup bearer bids me drain yet
another cup and I cannot.



When the hand holds a wheaten loaf, flesh, and
a flagon of wine in fellowship with tulip cheeks in
some lonely spot, behold such delight as is not given
to all sultans.

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Get dancing girls, wine, and a mistress fair as the houris, if any houris there be. Seek out a stream gushing by the meadow, if any meadow there be. Plague yourself no more, for there is no better Paradise than this, if any Paradise there be.



The battered caravanserai which men call the world, this shifting home of light and night, is but the fag end of a feast of a hundred such lords as Jamshyd. It is but a tomb serving as a pillow for the sleep of a hundred such kings as Bahram.



Rejoice, for the time comes when all whom you see now shall be hidden in the earth. Drink wine, and let not the cares of the world overwhelm you. Those who come after you will too soon become their prey.



Every morn I say, This shall be the night of repentance, repentance for the flagon and the flowing cup. Yet now that the season of roses has come, set me free from repentance, O Lord of Repentance.

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If I were free to have my will in this worthless world, how gladly would I choose never to have come here, never to have lived here, never to depart hence!



Some ponder on religion and belief, some swing bewildered between doubt and knowledge. Suddenly the watcher cries, Fools! Your road is not here nor there.



O Potter, how long will you degrade the clay of man? It is the finger of Feridoun, it is the hand of Kai-Khosron, that you turn upon the wheel. What are you thinking of?



You cannot be sure that you shall behold to-morrow. Even to think upon to-morrow is madness. If your heart is awake, do not waste this little hour of life, for there is no knowing how long it shall be with you.

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Do not ponder over the passing day. Do not mourn for unborn to-morrow. Do not build on the future and the past. Take your fair hour and do not fling your life to the wind.



This vault of heaven, under which we move in shadow, may be likened unto a magic lantern; the sun is the flame, and we, like the figures, live there in amazement.



When I am dead, wash me with the blood of the vine. Instead of prayers sing over my tomb songs of wine and flagons. If you seek me at the latter day, look for me in the dust upon the tavern threshold.

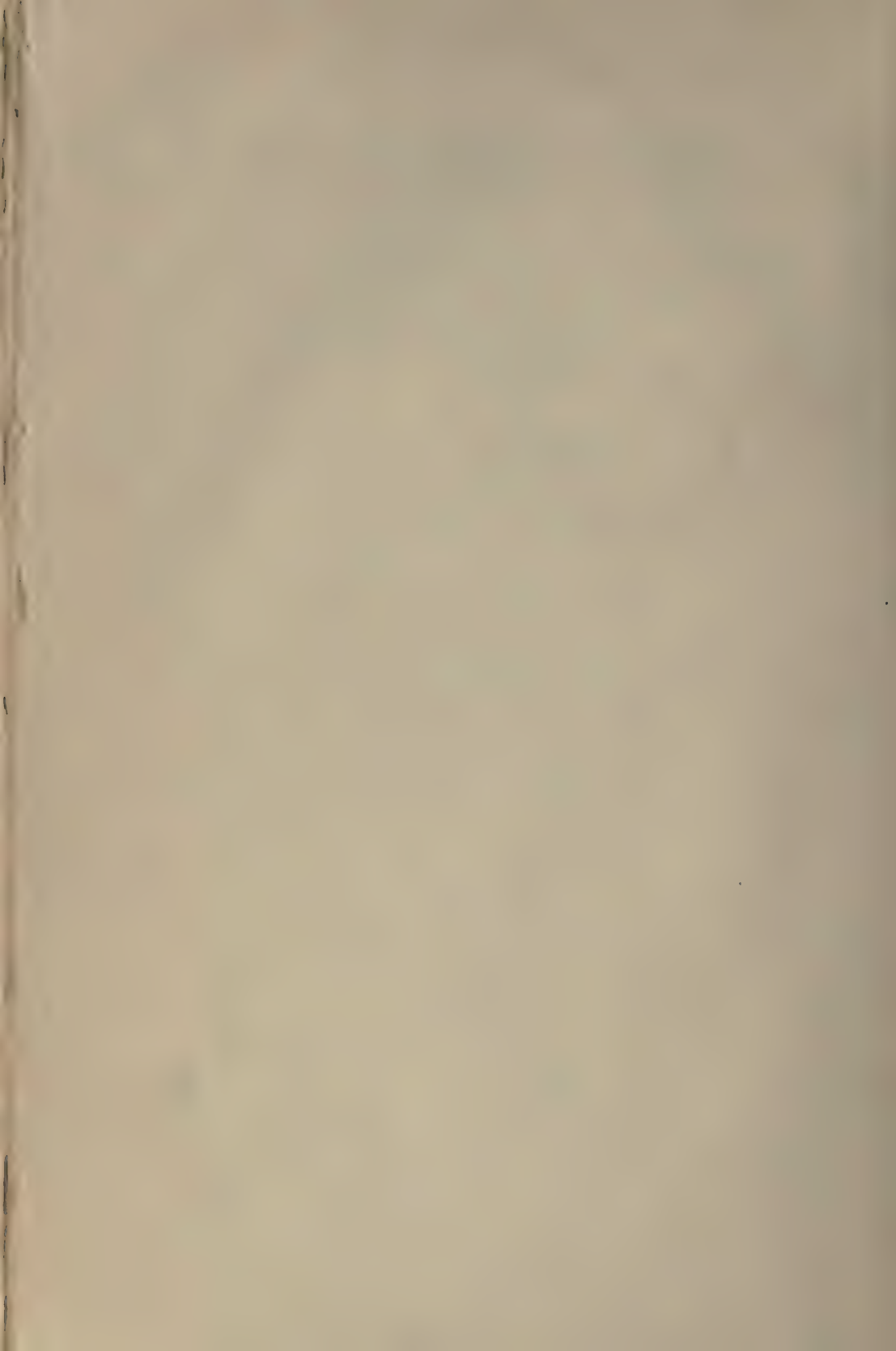


A drop of water sorrowed to be sundered from the ocean. Ocean smiling said, We are all in all, God is within and around us, and we are divided but by an imperceptible line.

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O my friend, when I am sped, appoint a meeting, and when ye have met together, be ye glad thereof; and when the cup bearer holds in her hand a flagon of old wine, then think upon the old Khayyám and drink to his memory.





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IN PRAISE OF OMAR

By THE HON. JOHN HAY

I CANNOT sufficiently thank you for the high and unmerited honour you have done me to-night. I feel keenly that on such an occasion, with such company, my place is below the salt; but as you kindly invited me, it was not in human nature for me to refuse.

Although in knowledge and comprehension of two great poets whom you are met to commemorate I am the least among you, there is no one who regards them with greater admiration, or reads them with more enjoyment than myself. I can never forget my emotions when I first saw FitzGerald's translations of the Quatrains. Keats, in his sublime ode on Chapman's Homer, has described the sensation once for all:—

“Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.”

An address given at a dinner of the Omar Khayyám Club in London (8 December, 1897), by Colonel John Hay.

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The exquisite beauty, the faultless form, the singular grace of those amazing stanzas, were not more wonderful than the depth and breadth of their profound philosophy, their knowledge of life, their dauntless courage, their serene facing of the ultimate problems of life and of death. Of course the doubt did not spare me, which has assailed many as ignorant as I was of the literature of the East, whether it was the poet or the translator to whom was due this splendid result. Was it, in fact, a reproduction of an antique song, or a mystification of a great modern, careless of fame, and scornful of his time? Could it be possible that in the eleventh century, so far away as Khorassan, so accomplished a man of letters lived, with such distinction, such breadth, such insight, such calm disillusion, such cheerful and jocund despair? Was this Weltschmerz, which we thought a malady of our day, endemic in Persia in 1100? My doubt only lasted till I came upon a literal translation of the Rubáiyát, and I saw that not the least remarkable quality of FitzGerald's poem was its fidelity to the original.

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In short, Omar was a FitzGerald before the latter or FitzGerald was a reincarnation of Omar. It is not to the disadvantage of the later poet that he followed so closely in the footsteps of the earlier. A man of extraordinary genius had appeared in the world; had sung a song of incomparable beauty and power in an environment no longer worthy of him, in a language of narrow range; for many generations the song was virtually lost; then by a miracle of creation, a poet, a twin-brother in the spirit to the first, was born, who took up the forgotten poem and sang it anew with all its original melody and force, and all the accumulated refinement of ages of art. It seems to me idle to ask which was the greater master; each seems greater than his work. The song is like an instrument of precious workmanship and marvellous tone, which is worthless in common hands, but when it falls, at long intervals, into the hands of the supreme master, it yields a melody of transcendent enchantment to all that have ears to hear. If we look at the sphere of influence of the two poets, there is no longer any comparison. Omar

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sang to a half-barbarous province; FitzGerald to the world. Wherever the English speech is spoken or read, the Rubáiyát have taken their place as a classic. There is not a hill-post in India, nor a village in England, where there is not a coterie to whom Omar Khayyám is a familiar friend and a bond of union. In America he has an equal following, in many regions and conditions. In the Eastern States his adepts form an esoteric sect; the beautiful volume of drawings by Mr. Vedder is a centre of delight and suggestion wherever it exists. In the cities of the West you will find the Quatrains one of the most thoroughly read books in every club library. I heard them quoted once in one of the most lonely and desolate spots of the high Rockies. We had been camping on the Great Divide, our "roof of the world," where in the space of a few feet you may see two springs, one sending its waters to the Polar solitudes, the other to the eternal Carib summer. One morning at sunrise, as we were breaking camp, I was startled to hear one of our party, a frontiersman born, intoning these words of sombre majesty:—

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" 'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death address ;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest."

I thought that sublime setting of primeval forest and pouring canyon was worthy of the lines; I am sure the dewless, crystalline air never vibrated to strains of more solemn music. Certainly, our poet can never be numbered among the great popular writers of all time. He has told no story; he has never unpacked his heart in public; he has never thrown the reins on the neck of the winged horse, and let his imagination carry him where it listed. "Ah! the crowd must have emphatic warrant," as Browning sang. Its suffrages are not for the cool, collected observer, whose eye no glitter can dazzle, no mist suffuse. The many cannot but resent that air of lofty intelligence, that pale and subtle smile. But he will hold a place forever among that limited number who, like Lucretius and Epicurus—without rage or defiance, even without unbecoming mirth,—look deep into the tangled mysteries of things; refuse credence to the absurd, and allegiance to arrogant authority: sufficiently

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conscious of fallibility to be tolerant of all opinions; with a faith too wide for doctrine and a benevolence untrammelled by creed: too wise to be wholly poets, and yet too surely poets to be implacably wise.

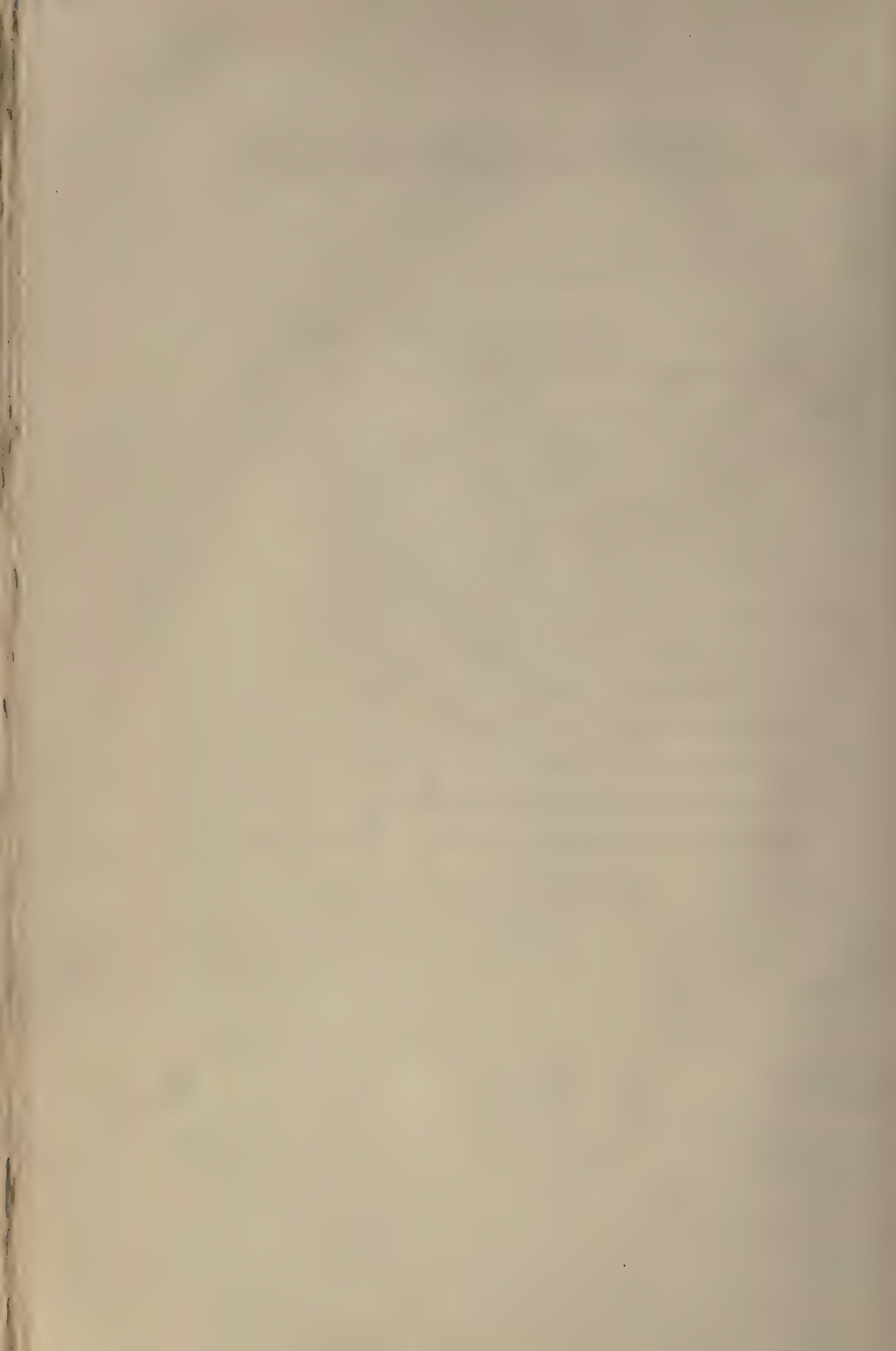
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TO CECILIA.

The Wine of Life, the Wonder of the Spring;
The passionate madness of the Nightingale,
Whose Litany all lovers' lips must wail;
"Farewell, farewell, farewell to everything"—
These Omar sang, and these myself shall sing
In dreams beside some stream where tulips sail,
Red Argosies, before the scented gale,
While you recline on Cæsar's dust, and string
Your lute through all the languid afternoon
 To Persian airs of Desert and of Palm,
 Of green oasis and of gardens sweet
With roses, where the magic of the moon
 In silver steeps the consecrated calm
 And on the enchanted sward our shadows meet.

XXII. X. XCVIII

JUSTIN HUNTLEY McCARTHY.



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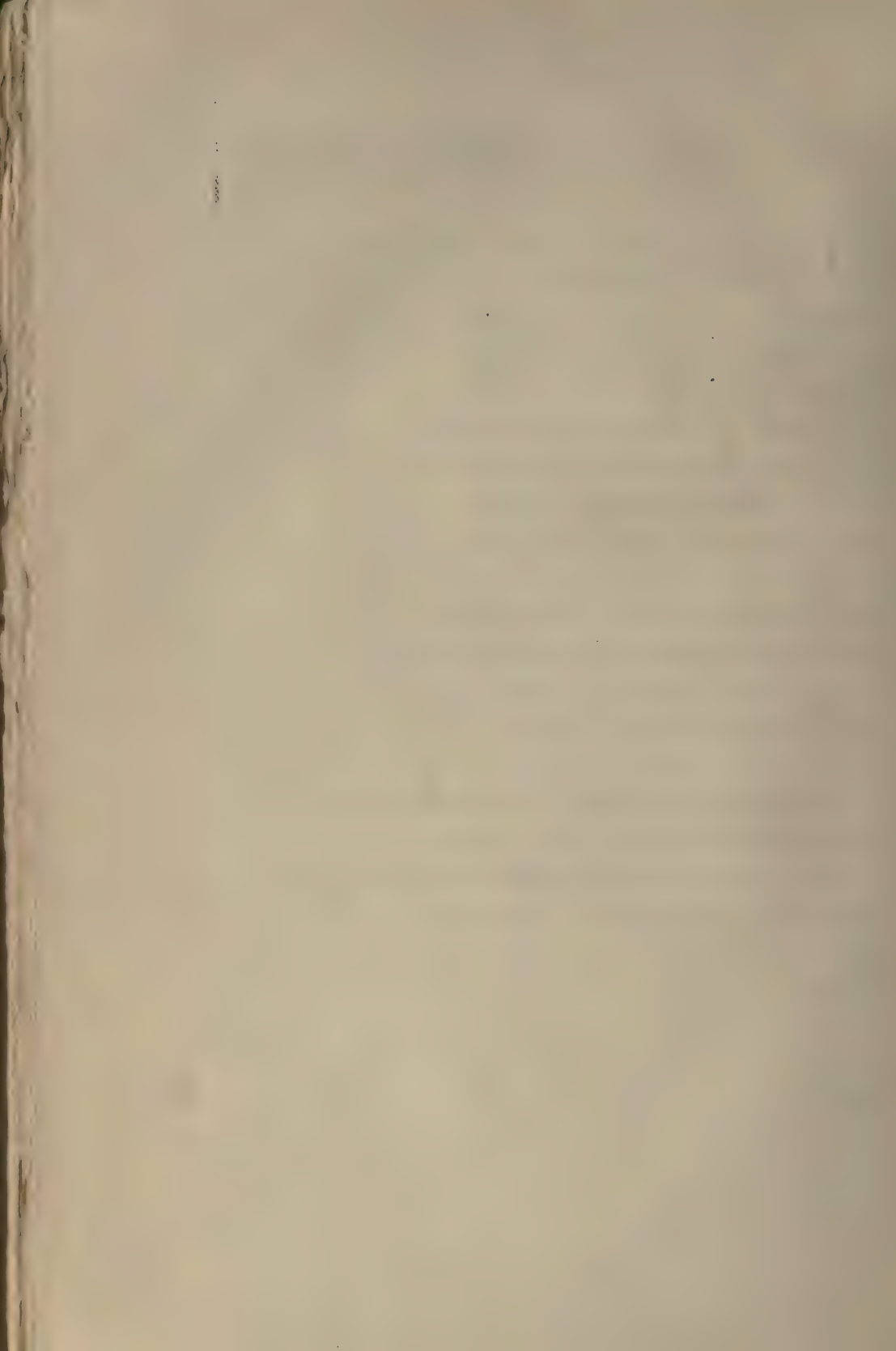
O MAR, dear sultan of the Persian song;
Familiar friend, whom I have loved so long;
Whose volume made my pleasant hiding-place
From this fantastic world of right and wrong.

My youth lies buried in thy verses: Lo,
I read, and as the haunted numbers flow,
My memory turns in anguish to the face
That leaned o'er Omar's pages long ago.

Alas for me, Alas for all who weep
And wonder at the silence dark and deep
That girdles round this little lamp in space
No wiser than when Omar fell asleep.

Rest in thy grave beneath the crimson rain
Of heart-desired roses. Life is vain,
And vain the trembling legends we may trace
Upon the open book that shuts again.

JUSTIN HUNTLEY McCARTHY.



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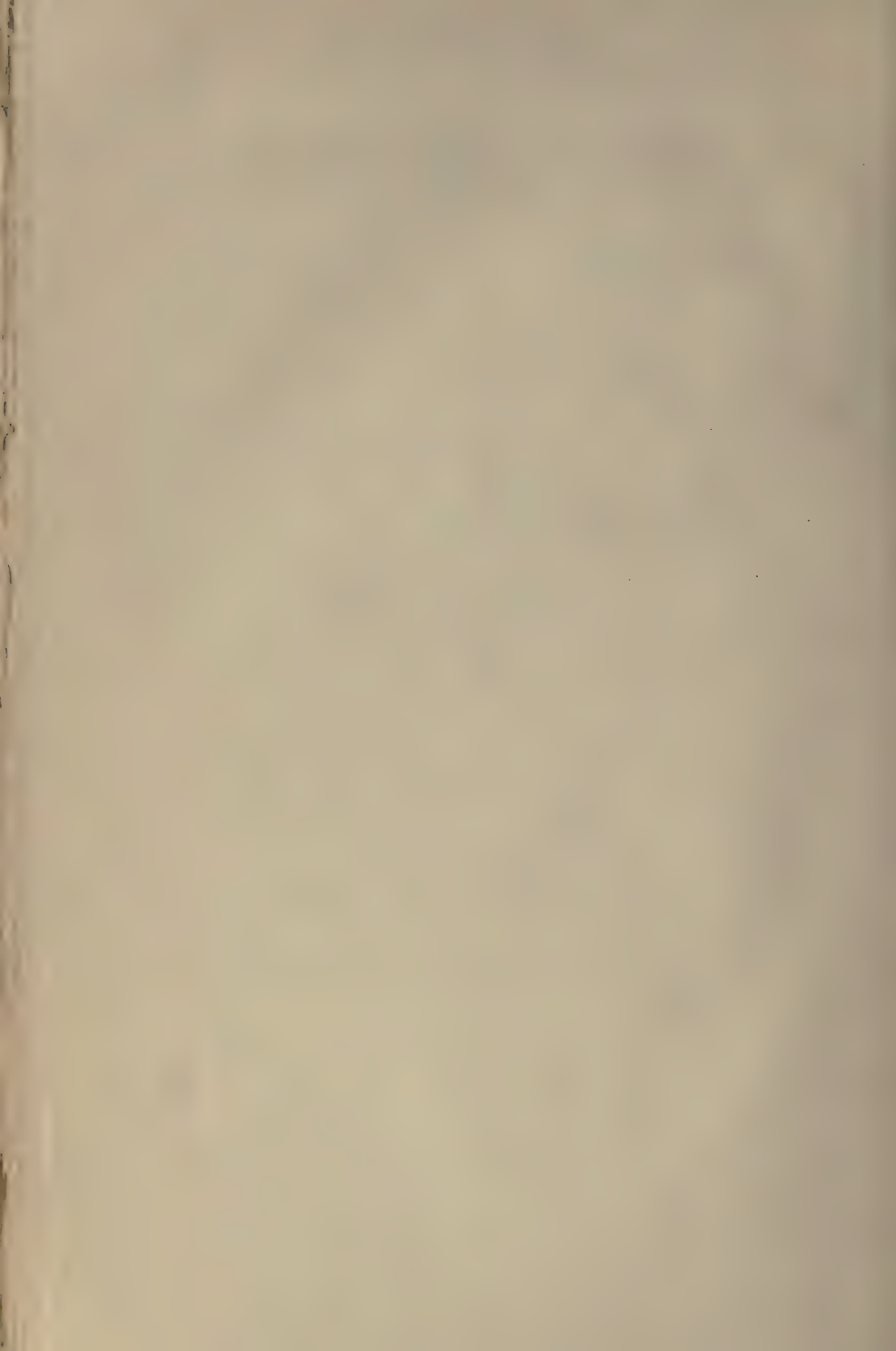
OMAR KHAYYÁM

TO A. L.

SAYER of sooth, and searcher of dim skies
Lover of song, and sun, and summertide,
For whom so many roses bloomed and died;
Tender interpreter, most sadly wise,
Of earth's dumb, inarticulated cries!
Time's self cannot estrange us, nor divide;
Thy hand still beckons from the garden-side,
Through green vine-garlands, when the winter dies.

Thy calm lips smile on us, thine eyes are wet;
The nightingale's full song sobs all through thine,
And thine in hers,—part human, part divine!
Among the deathless Gods thy place is set,
All-wise, but drowsy with life's mingled wine,
Laughter and learning, passion and regret.

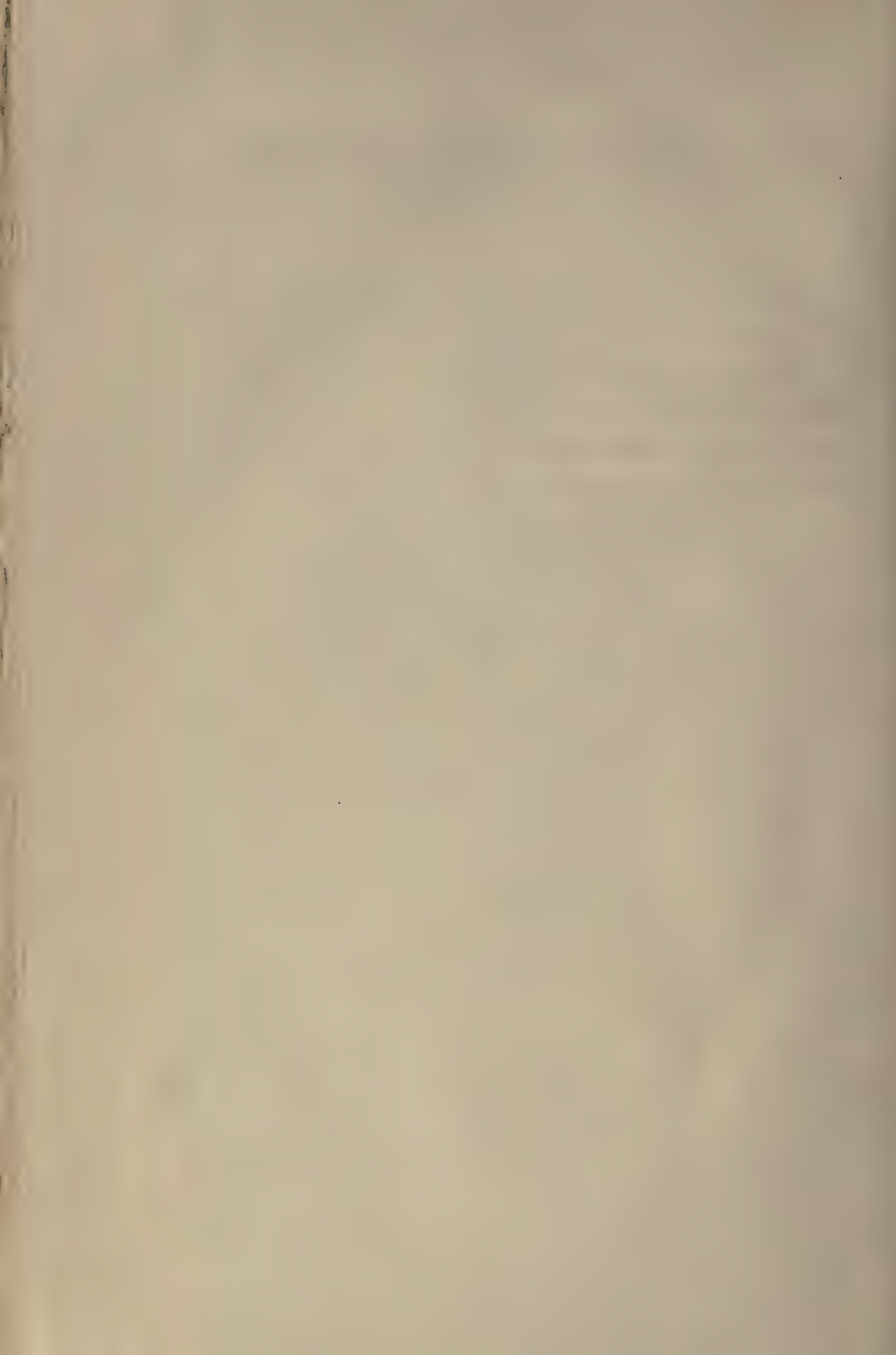
ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON.



THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

KEATS once entreated some traveller who was going to the East, to take a copy of "Endymion" with him, and when he came to the great Sahara, to cast the volume from him with all his force far away into the yellow waves of sand. It was a delicious, fantastic wish, that the loveliest poem of our later English speech should lie and drift in the remote Sahara, and be covered at last in the sand that has engulfed so many precious things, but none more precious, caravans, and gold, and tissues, and fair slaves, and the chiefs of mighty clans. If I might frame a wish in distant emulation, I would choose that some wanderer to the East, some Burton, some Kinglake, some Warburton, might carry this little book in his saddle-bags, and ride through Khorassan till he came to Naishápúr, and cast it down in the dust before the tomb of Omar Khayyám.

JUSTIN HUNTLEY McCARTHY.



XXIV QUATRAINS

FROM OMAR

By F. York Powell

I

Kháyyâm, that used to stitch the tents of Thought,
Into Grief's furnace dropt, was burnt to naught;
The shears of Fate his Life's tent ropes have cut;
Yea, Hope's sharp Broker sold him—nor got aught.

II

The World gains naught that I live here below,
And my Departure will not mar its show;
No man has told me yet, nor do I know
Why I came here, or *wherefore* whence I go.

III

The Day is breaking, let us welcome him
With glasses crimson-beaded to the brim;
And as for Name and Fame, and Blame and Shame,
What are they all?—mere Talk and idle Whim.

THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

IV

Why at the Dawning must the cock still crow?

It is that by his crowing he may show

That one more Night has slid from out thy Life:
And thou art lying asleep and dost not know.

V

Life's caravan speeds strangely swift, take care;

It is thy Youth that's fleeting, Friend, beware;

Nor vex thyself for Woe to come, in vain,
For lo, the Night rolls on, and Dawn breaks bare.

VI

The Spheres that turn have brought no luck to thee,

What matter how the Years or Seasons flee?

Two Days there are to which I pay no heed—
The Day that's gone, the Day that is to be.

THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

VII

Above thine head looms Heaven's Bull Parwin ;

Beneath thy feet a Bull bears Earth unseen ;

Open the eyes of Knowledge, and behold

This drove of Asses these two Bulls between.

VIII

The Rose said, 'I am Joseph's flower, for, lo,

My Cup is full of Gold.' 'If this be so,

Give me another sign,' I cried, and She

Made answer, 'Red with gore my Garments show.'

IX

Rose, thou art like unto a Face most fair ;

Rose, thou art like unto a Ruby rare ;

Fate, thou art ever changing shape and hue,

Yet ever hast the same familiar air.

X

Though the Rose fade, yet are the Thorns our lot ;

Though the Light fail, yet is the Ember hot ;

Though Robe and Priest and Presence all are gone,
The empty Mosque at least we still have got.

XI

Open the door ; the Key is Thine alone !

Show me the Path, only to thee 'tis known !

The idle Hands they reach I will not take,
Thine Everlasting Arms shall bear me on !

XII

O Lord, have mercy on my enslaved Soul :

Have mercy on my Heart that Griefs control ;

Have mercy on my Foot that seeks the Inn :
Have mercy on my Hand that craves the Bowl.

XIII

Creeds seventy-two among Mankind there be,
Of all these Faiths I choose but Faith in Thee :
 Law, Sin, Repentance, all are idle words :
Thou art my Hope. What's all the rest to me ?

XIV

The Drop of Water wept to leave the Sea,
But the Sea laught and said, ' We still are we.'
 God is within, without, and all around,
And not a hair's-breadth severs Me and Thee.

XV

Now Thou art hidden, unseen of all that be ;
Now Thou art full display'd that all may see :
 Being, as Thou art, the Player and the Play,
And playing for Thine own pleasure, carelessly.

THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

XVI

On these twin Compasses, my Soul, you see
One Body and two Heads, like You and Me,
Which wander round one centre circle-wise,
But at the end in one same point agree.

XVII

The Heart wherein Love's wick burns clear and well,
Whether it swing in mosque or shrine or cell,
If in the Book of Love it be enroll'd,
Is free from Hope of Heaven or Fear of Hell.

XVIII

Whether in Heaven or Hell my lot be stay'd,
A Cup, a Lute, a fair and frolic Maid,
Within a place of Roses please me now;
While on the chance of Heaven thy Life is laid.

XIX

I lack not hope of Grace, though stained by Lust;
Like the poor Heathen that in idols trust,
 Woman and Wine I'll worship while I live,
Nor flinch from Heaven or Hell, since die I must.

XX

Come, friend, the cares of this brief life dismiss,
Be merry in thy momentary bliss,
 If God were constant in his favour, think,
Thy turn had never come for Cup or Kiss.

XXI

Let not the World's mass too much on thee weigh;
Nor grieve for those that Death has made his prey;
 Lose not thine Heart save to the Fairest Fair,
Nor lack good Wine, nor fling thy Life away.

XXII

'Tis well to be of good Report and Trust;
'Tis ill to make complaint that God's unjust;
 'Tis better to be drunk with good red Wine
Than swollen with Hypocrisy's black must.

XXIII

No Shield can save thee from the Shaft of Fate,
Nor to be glorious or rich or great;
 The more I ponder, still the more I see
That Truth is All, naught else has any weight.

XXIV

Of Duty towards God let Preachers whine,
But do as I command, and Heaven's thine;
 Give freely, slander not, be kindly still,
That done, have thou no fear, and call for Wine.

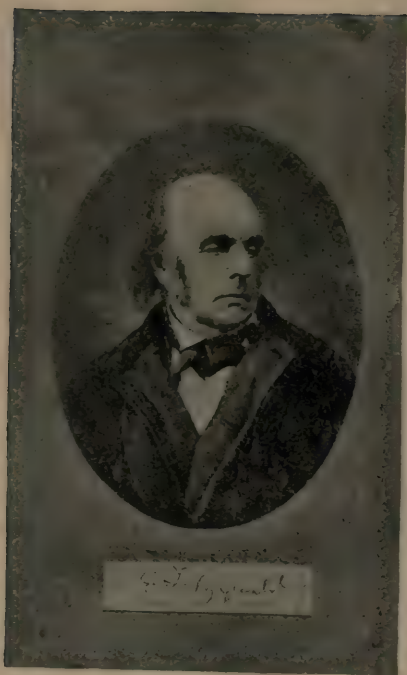
THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

TO E. FITZGERALD.

Old Fitz, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile ;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And watch your doves around you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head, their rosy feet,
As if they knew their diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers ;
Who live on milk and meal and grass ;

.
—but none can say
That lenten fare makes lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well ;
A planet equal to the Sun
Which cost it that large infidel.
Your Omar ;

ALFRED TENNYSON.



Genl. J. J. J. J.

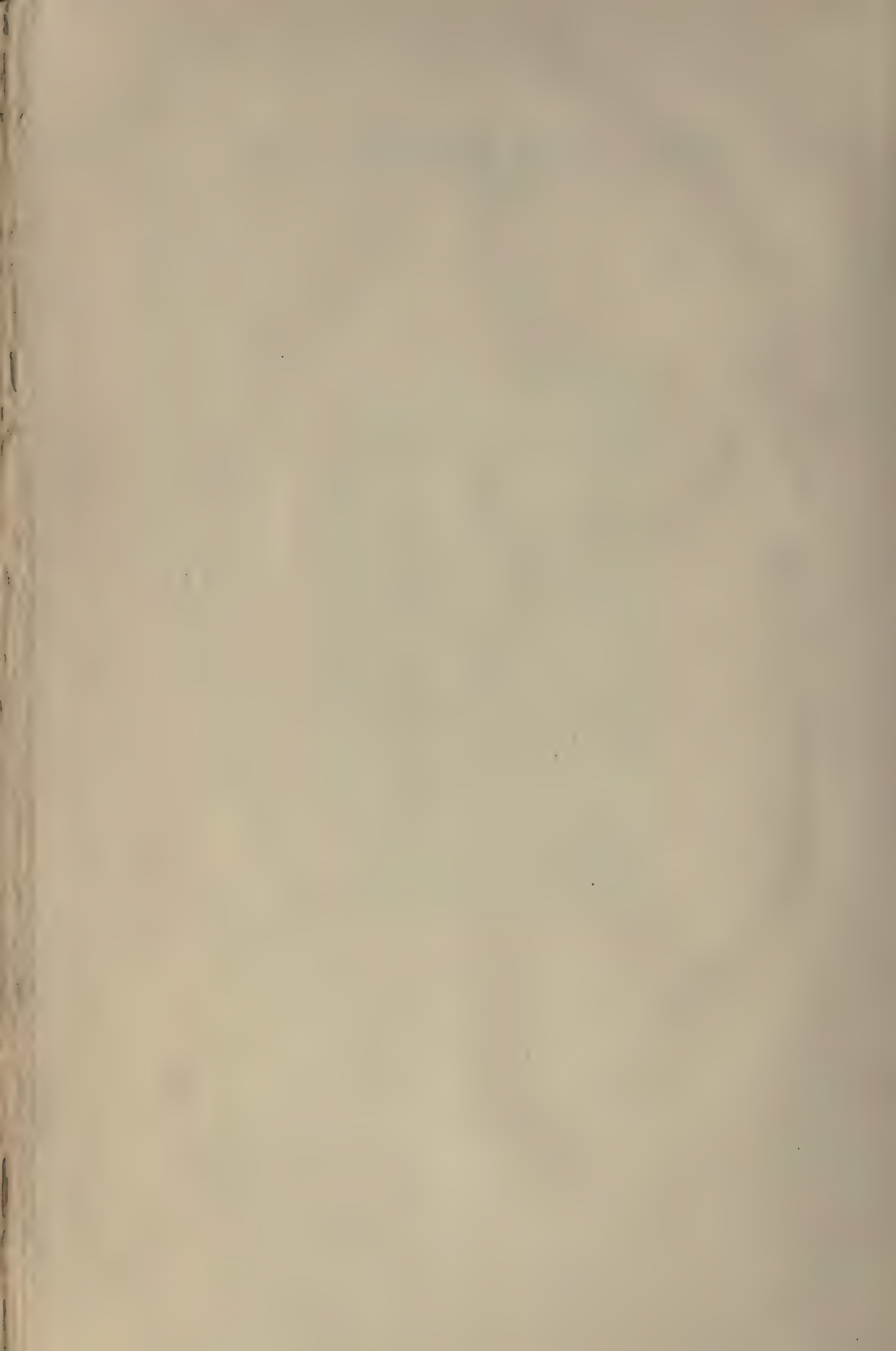
THE BOOK OF OMAR AND RUBAIYAT

APPRECIATION—E. FITZG.

Who is rashly to decide what place may not finally be awarded to a man capable of such admirable feats in English prose and verse?

There can be little doubt that when much contemporary clamour has died out forever, the clear note of the nightingale of Woodbridge will still be heard from the alleys of his Persian Garden.

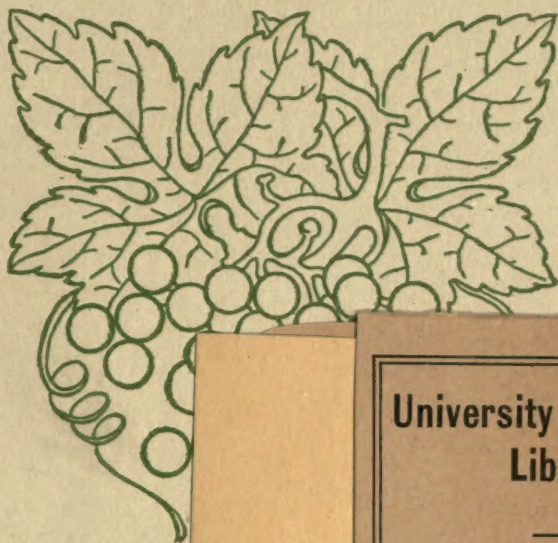
EDMUND GOSSE.



BOOK OF OMAR
AND RUBÁIYÁT



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